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Report on Reasons Behind Disproportionate Number of Blacks in Foster Care Due Next Month

Date: Wednesday, May 16, 2007

By: ackie Jones, BlackAmericaWeb.com

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A long awaited investigation into the causes behind the disproportionate representation of blacks and other children of color in the foster care system is scheduled to be released in late June, according to the Government Accountability Office, which is conducting the probe.

Rep. Charles Rangel (D-Harlem) asked the GAO in September 2005 to investigate the causes of disproportionate placement and to recommend solutions following a report from the Congressional Research Office, which showed that black and American Indian children were about twice as likely to be among the children entering the foster care system than their overall presence in the general population.

According to that report, theories about racial disproportion in the child welfare system suggest that children of color are more likely to be poor or from single parent homes, which are considered risk factors for maltreatment; that they come into contact more often with social services officials who are likely to report such mistreatment; that biased assumptions likely spur social service employees to report children of color to child protective services, and that children of color have less access to preventive services or conditions that promote permanent placement.

However, the National Incidence Survey, which collects data to measure the mistreatment of children, including incidents not reported to Child Protective Services, have consistently found no link between race and the incident of maltreatment in the general population. National studies show there is no significant difference across racial lines for the number of children who are subjected to abuse and neglect.



Rep. Charles Rangel (above) asked the Government Accountability Office in September 2005 to investigate the causes of disproportionate placement and to recommend solutions following a report from the Congressional Research Office, which showed that black and American Indian children were about twice as likely to be among the children entering the foster care system than their overall presence in the general population.



AP Video



In an interview last year with BlackAmericaWeb.com, Ralph Bayard, director of diversity for Casey Family Programs, said that black families do tend to be somewhat poorer, which may make them more visible to the welfare system, but there is no clear explanation for the widely disproportionate number of black children in foster care.

“If poverty was the only factor,” Bayard **told BlackAmericaWeb** at the time, “you’d have more white children” in the system because in raw numbers, there are more poor white children than black ones.

More than 800,000 children come through the foster care system annually, and at any point during the year, there can be as many as a half million children in care. Black children represent 38 to 42 percent of the placements, more than double their presence in the general population.

Casey Family Programs developed The Breakthrough Series Collaborative, a pilot program to test ways of reducing the overrepresentation of children of color in foster care. Thirteen jurisdictions across the country were recruited to test ideas, strategies and tools to determine what can change or improve care of service delivery to children in the foster care system.

Lyman Legters, director of the Seattle field office for Casey Family Programs and a leader of the King County Coalition on Disproportionality, said a number of efforts have shown some success anecdotally, but the process of developing measurable statistical data was ongoing.

“We don’t have any empirical data,” Legters said. “We are in the process of developing a model for the evaluation of disproportionate data in our county.”

Additionally, Legters **told BlackAmericaWeb.com**, the state of Washington passed legislation earlier this year requiring the state Department of Social and Health services to analyze and come up with solutions, statewide, on the disproportionate placement of children of color in foster care.

The state of Michigan underwent a similar process in 2004. A report released in March 2006, listed 11 recommendations and a timetable to implement the changes.

Those recommendations revolved around “the redistribution of existing funding so it is spread among the most vulnerable population, an extensive review to see if we have institutional bias and establishing monitoring local accountable teams to make sure the recommendations are implemented and sustained,” said Gale Norman, the race equity coordinator for the Michgian Department of Human Services.

Norman said a pilot program in a rural area of Saginaw County, Michigan reviewed a half dozen family cases and found differences in the way black families were treated compared to white families. A similar program will be implemented in September in Wayne County, in which the city of Detroit is located.

After the data are gathered, Norman told BlackAmericaWeb.com, the state will look at institutional practices and employee training employees, will identify "the policies and practices that occur at intake" and will establish procedures to monitor the services families receive.

In addition, she said, the state will ask for a waiver in the pilot counties of the way that federal money targeted for foster care could be used for programs that help keep children at home with their families.

"The first couple of years, we collected data," Norman said, "but until we get into the actual case and go into the home, it's difficult to tell whether it's institutional bias or racism on the part of the caseworker. We're looking at decision points, and that's very telling" about the quality of care children receive.

In King County, Washington, Legters said, three primary areas of intervention were identified, ranging from cultural competence in addressing issues for children of color, reviewing cases of children who had been in the system for long periods of time without permanent placement and placement planning within the court system.

The King County task force developed a program with graduate students in social work at the University of Washington to work with social workers and their supervisors in the foster care system to identify children who have been in the system two years or more.

"In our Champions of Permanence Program, (master of social work) students were mining files for kids who have been in foster care longer than two years to look for permanent placement opportunities that might have been missed," Legters said. "Anecdotally, there was a good deal of success that resulted in revised plans and actual relative placement for a number of children.

"The other outcome was we had a cohort of 22 MSW students that got the benefit of doing that work and ... got hired in social work positions with some of the agencies. It was not an intended outcome when we planned this, but it worked out that way," Legters said.

Legters said the task force is going to look at the coordination of a wide array of systems involved in foster care to determine whether efficiencies can be achieved there. It also will examine placements within the court system to see if the process can be accelerated. It will also look at cultural difference that may play a role in the treatment of families.

In an earlier interview, Legters said many child welfare agencies are normed for the majority population and do not address the lack of cultural competence or the

particular resources communities of color need.

Casey's Indian Child Welfare unit participated in the Breakthrough series, and cultural competency issues were immediately noticeable.

"There was tension between our Indian Welfare unit with the local CASA in the initial meetings," Legters said this week. "So we came up with a plan to develop more Native American CASAS."

He added that an "Undoing Racism" workshop focusing on the evolution of institutional racism that task force members were required to attend "wasn't particularly relevant to the Native experience. It was useful, but it didn't resonate with the experiences of Indians, so we worked with the Peoples Institute to focus on their distinct and unique experiences."


Asked if the release of the GAO report would assist this work, Legters said, "Our regional team was interviewed by the GAO. We're absolutely watching that to see what the audit reveals. Casey Family Programs is very interested in the outcomes of that report. We provided technical assistance to congressman Rangel when he asked the question" about disproportional representation.

While he has not had a sneak preview of the report, Legters said he expected "that much of it is confirming what we already know. It'll be interesting to see if we have any deep, startling revelations.

"We already know that black children and children of color tend not to do well in the foster care system, and it's not because there's anything wrong with them, said Letgers. "It's because there's something wrong with the system."

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05/16/2007

Bus driver quits over biting

School board was on the verge of firing her

BY SHERI MCWHIRTER
smcwhirter@record-eagle.com

GAYLORD - A Gaylord school bus driver quit amid allegations she bit two young girls assigned to her route.

Patricia Lynn Lawes, 44, submitted a letter of resignation to officials at Gaylord Community Schools on Monday, just hours before she faced termination by the Board of Education.

Two middle school girls were bitten, according to reports, at least one of them on the face, during separate incidents between April 16 and 26. Both girls were passengers on Lawes' school bus.

"There was some horseplay involved and this was a result of the horseplay," said Cheryl Wojtas, superintendent of schools.

A parent reported the episodes on May 1 and Lawes was suspended. Digital video was reviewed by district officials, but did not reveal what led to the incidents.

"The behavior is not captured on the tape because the camera position is pointed above the driver's head, to monitor the students in their seats, not those near her," Wojtas said.

She said Lawes could have been fired, but the resignation arrived at the district office prior to the Monday night meeting.

Lawes could not be reached for comment at phone numbers listed in public records.

She recently had been reprimanded and transferred to another bus route after speaking inappropriately to students. She has a clean driving record and was first certified to drive a school bus in September 1998, officials said.

"It's certainly something I'm ashamed happened in our district and I wish we could have prevented this," Wojtas said.

There are 27 bus drivers in Gaylord who transport upwards of 1,300 students every school day. Lawes earned about \$15,000 at the 38-week job she had for the last 10 years.

She is also under investigation by state officials for a child care center she operates on Fisher Road, said Maureen Sorbert, spokeswoman for the Michigan Department of Human Services. Sorbert declined to

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release details of the probe.

About a year ago, another Gaylord school bus driver, Sena Black, was fired for forcing some students to get off a bus on an unfamiliar dirt road and abandoning them there.

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Posted: 5-16-2007

A match challenge from children Funding would help

MELISSA MCGUIRE - DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

A group of children proved they really can do a lot for the community — now they are challenging the community to make a difference, too.

The André Bosse Center Kids' Coalition has recently completed a Cool Coins for Kids drive in area elementary schools that raised \$4,700, far surpassing the goal of \$1,500. In response to the drive, an anonymous pledge of \$5,000 has been made to encourage community members to follow the lead of the Kids' Coalition.

The André Bosse Center is a resource for human services organizations, law enforcement officials and the courts to help children who are victims of abuse or neglect and their families. The organization, like many other human services organizations, is getting busier while at the same time receiving less funds.

“We are incredibly swamped,” said Development Coordinator Megan Maltbie. “It’s not additional abuse in the area, though, it’s a case of working better as a community.”

The André Bosse Center, headquartered in Hart, established a Mason County center, Kids' House, in 2005. The organization aims to work with agencies that help children who are in an abuse situation.

The center's staff members expected the number of clients would grow as the law enforcement and other community agencies embraced the local center, and they were right.

“We are using the agency on more complaints now,” said Mason County Prosecuting Attorney Susan Sniegowski. “We like to use a team approach when we do a child abuse or child sexual abuse case and have all the services together at the center instead of taking the child to the court, hospital and sheriff's office. It really minimizes the trauma and provides more comfort to the child.”

Maltbie said that from Jan. 1 through April 12 the number of clients served at the center already had surpassed the number served in all of 2006. “That’s a good thing, though,” she said. “We are seeing that everyone gets what they need. We are just growing faster than the money is coming in.”

Of all the funding for the center, 85 percent comes from community donations, and the remaining funding is supplied by grants.

Fundraisers driven by children in the Kids' Coalition have brought in the biggest financial contributions to the center, according to Maltbie and the center's executive director, Paul Anders.

"They don't know the numbers, but they just get it at a level adults don't," Maltbie said. "They know how kids feel and what some of the signs are."

"It's interesting and sad when you ask a kid about this kind of stuff," Anders said.

The André Bosse Center Kids' Coalition meets at least once a month depending on upcoming projects and has voted almost unanimously to meet throughout the summer. The coalition has new ideas coming up for family nights and other family-oriented ideas that aren't fundraisers.

"It boosts them to see they are helping, it makes them feel good about themselves," Maltbie said.

They remind people that not everyone has a lot of money to donate, but just \$1 turns into \$2 because of the match.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Wednesday, May 16, 2007

Support bill for equal parenting

House Bill 4564, the equal parenting bill, was re-introduced on April 5 by state Rep Glenn Steil Jr., R-Grand Rapids. The bill would require judges in custody disputes between divorcing parents to order joint custody unless ``the court determines by clear and convincing evidence that a parent is unfit, unwilling, or unable to care for the child" or, if a parent ``is unable to maintain the child's school schedule without interruption."

H.B. 4564 has 21 co-sponsors, all of them Republicans except for state Rep. Robert Dean, D-Grand Rapids. Many other co-sponsors are also from West Michigan, including state Rep. Jack Hoogendyk, R-Texas Township. I urge you to support Rep. Hoogendyk's decision. You may write him at: Jack Hoogendyk, Michigan House of Representatives, P.O. Box 30014, Lansing, MI 48909-7514, call him at (517) 373-1774, or by e-mail at: jackhoogendyk@house.mi.gov.

I encourage all parents and affected others to write to this paper and our elected officials at the county and state levels to show support for the equal parenting bill and movement in Michigan. Our elected officials need to be told and shown that business as usual will no longer be allowed when it comes to the issues of child custody, promoting divorce and funding the destruction of our families.

Phillip N. Wurm
Hastings

NeuroHealth Advances Mental Health Treatment Outcomes for Juvenile Offenders

Troy, MI, May 16, 2007 --([PR.com](#))-- NeuroHealth today announced that it finalized a renewal of a two-year agreement with the Nokomis Skills Challenge Center, an agency of the Michigan Department of Human Services located in Prudenville, Michigan, to provide mental health services including neurotherapy training and follow-up consultation for juvenile offenders at the facility. “Nokomis is really cutting-edge when it comes to getting results and it shows,” says Tom Johnson, NeuroHealth CEO.

NeuroHealth is a multi-modal, outpatient mental health and neuro-cognitive rehabilitation organization that specializes in ADHD, traumatic brain injury, and related conditions. It is an evidence-based practice that provides state-of-the-art diagnoses and treatment programs dedicated to achieving the best possible treatment outcome for each patient.

Some of the services NeuroHealth offers include: comprehensive testing and assessment including quantitative electroencephalography (qEEG or brain mapping), neurofeedback, cognitive / behavioral therapies, cognitive rehabilitation, learning and vocational therapies, intensive outpatient programming and individualized educational programs including site visits.

NeuroHealth Management provides administrative business services to an ever-growing number of NeuroHealth Associates clinic locations, including Troy (Main Office), Grand Blanc (Genesys Medical Center), Flint (McLaren Medical Center) and additional medical center locations coming soon in Flint and Rochester, Michigan. For more information about NeuroHealth, call toll-free at 888.261.6198 or email info@expertsinmind.com.

For more information, contact:
Thomas B. Johnson, CEO
NeuroHealth Management LLC



In health care, U.S. pays more, gets less

May 16, 2007

BY ELIZABETH LOPATTO

BLOOMBERG NEWS

Americans have the world's costliest health care system, and it gets poorer results than programs in Britain, Canada, Germany, Australia and New Zealand, according to a report issued this week.

Britain had the best system in "quality care, access, efficiency, equity and healthy lives," the report said, and it spends less per person than the United States or Canada.

"The U.S. spends more and doesn't get more," Karen Davis, president of the Commonwealth Fund and the report's lead author, said Tuesday. The fund, which sponsored the report, is a New-York based nonprofit group.

The United States differs from the other nations studied in one notable way, the report said: It doesn't have universal health insurance.

The United States had 45.8 million uninsured people in 2004, according to a 2005 report from the U.S. Health and Human Services Department. That represents 15.7% of the civilian population that isn't in a long-term care facility. As many as 63% of uninsured people are under the age of 34.

Americans with below-average incomes were more likely than their peers in other countries to report not getting needed care because of cost, the authors wrote.

Total U.S. health care spending -- by government, employers, insurance and individuals -- was an average of \$6,102 per person in 2004. That was more than the spending on each person in every other country, after adjusting for the local cost of living.

"We do take more medication," which explains why the U.S. costs are higher, Davis said.

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Article published May 16, 2007

Berrien County Social Security fraud case in court Few show up for arraignment; 202 to be charged in coming weeks.

CAROL DRAEGER
Tribune Staff Writer

ST. JOSEPH -- Opening day of court for about two dozen defendants accused in one of Berrien County's largest fraud cases was short Tuesday.

Only six of 25 people scheduled to be arraigned showed up in Berrien County Trial Court and most pleaded to lesser misdemeanor charges.

Over the next two weeks, prosecutors intend to charge 202 people with fraud involving Social Security and welfare.

Most are accused of receiving duplicate, and in some cases, several Social Security checks by claiming their original checks were stolen or not received, according to Prosecuting Attorney Art Cotter.

Some are also accused of welfare fraud by not reporting the extra Social Security money to Michigan's Department of Human Services. If Tuesday's hourlong session is any indication, most will accept plea agreements and be ordered to pay fines of about \$500 and restitution. If the fines are not repaid during scheduled payments, jail time will be imposed, Judge Charles LaSata said.

Restitution has already begun in a few cases with the Social Security Administration garnisheeing current and future Social Security payments to defendants to recoup the overpaid money.

It was unclear in the proceedings why the six women who appeared in court were eligible for Social Security payments.

LaSata asked each defendant if she had a job. Only one, Marcia Collins, of Benton Harbor, said yes.

When the defendants said no, LaSata asked, "Why not?" When Courtney Banks, 30, of Benton Harbor, told LaSata that she couldn't work because of her children, he informed her that "many mothers with children work."

In addition to Banks being required to pay about \$560 in fines and \$670 in restitution, LaSata imposed nine months of probation and ordered Banks to get a job.

If Banks isn't employed by June 15, LaSata told her she must give her probation officer five completed job applications each week.

"If not, you'll see me back in court and you will go to jail," he said. Only one of the women arraigned, Melissa Alexander, plead not guilty to multiple felony counts.

LaSata entered not guilty pleas on four counts for Alexander, 26, of Benton Harbor.

Alexander is accused of defrauding welfare in 2005, a five-year felony.

She is also accused of defrauding Social Security using another person's name from August 2001 to October of 2005 of more than \$1,000 but less than \$20,000.

LaSata told Alexander to get rid of her gum when he couldn't understand her answers. Alexander said she stopped working in 2005 after the birth of a child.

Chief Assistant Prosecuting Attorney Mike Sepic said the remainder of the defendants who didn't show up Tuesday will be given the next two weeks to turn themselves in to Benton Township and Benton Harbor police.

He said a mailing was sent last week to the 202 defendants ordering them to appear in court for their arraignments.

Judge scolds fraud offenders

By SARAH McEVILLY
H-P Staff Writer

ST. JOSEPH — Frances Archer said she was just doing what she had to do when she falsely reported not receiving a Social Security check, got a second payment and then cashed both checks in January of 2005.

“This situation had to do with my grandchildren,” she said in Berrien County Trial Court on Tuesday afternoon. “It was something I couldn’t avoid. They were hungry and I had to feed them.”

Archer, 59, of Dowagiac is one of 202 people facing charges in Berrien County for Social Security fraud. She pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor and was ordered to pay \$588 in restitution to the Social Security Administration. “I’m very, very sorry for what I’ve done because I’ve never, ever been in any trouble,” she told Trial Court Judge Charles LaSata.

Of the 25 people scheduled for arraignment Tuesday afternoon, only six, including Archer, showed up.

The 202 people were scheduled alphabetically in groups of 25 to turn themselves in to police on a certain day and then return to court in St. Joseph that afternoon for their arraignments, Chief Assistant Prosecutor Mike Sepic said. They were sent notices in the mail.

Tuesday marked the first round of arraignments. They will continue the rest of this week, and Tuesday through Friday of next week. Sepic said the people who don’t turn themselves in and show up for their hearings can still come any time during the next two weeks of arraignments and not be penalized. After that, warrants will be issued for their arrest.

The criminal charges brought against the 202 people were the result of a six-month investigation, called “Operation Raincheck,” by federal authorities and police in Berrien County. The stolen money amounted to \$578,745.

The investigation targeted people who falsely reported not receiving a Social Security check, got a second payment and then cashed both checks. The amount of money involved in each case of “double checking” was typically \$500 to \$1,000, but some of the accused allegedly committed the fraud more than once.

Twenty-one of the people charged with defrauding the Social Security Administration face additional welfare fraud charges, and nine face charges of defrauding the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The welfare fraud and housing fraud charges allege that the people failed to

report the extra Social Security income they were receiving through the extra checks. A person's income affects the amount of benefits, and possible eligibility, for programs run by the Michigan Department of Human Services and HUD.

Each of the 202 people will be offered a plea bargain, Sepic said. However, some people charged with felonies will not be able to plead to a lesser charge during their arraignments and will need to have a preliminary examination.

Five of the six people who showed up for their hearings Tuesday took the plea bargains. They were ordered to pay restitution in the form of automatic withholdings on their Social Security checks and to pay court fines and costs. Some were given probation and community service sentences. Courtney Banks, 30 of Benton Harbor was ordered to get a job as part of her probation.

Melissa Alexander, 26, of Benton Harbor was not allowed to take a plea agreement because she is facing felony charges. Instead, she will have to get a lawyer and go through a preliminary hearing.

LaSata said it is "despicable" that people are taking money from the Social Security Administration, which is just trying to help people in need.

"You know what you did was wrong," he told Marcia Collins, 33 of Benton Harbor.

Linda Allen, 35 of Benton Harbor, and Renal Brown, 27, of Buchanan, both admitted to using poor judgment and apologized for what they had done.

"Hopefully, you'll use better judgment in the future," LaSata said.

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05/15/2007

Forum

'Nonprofitization' can work

BY ROBIN CASE NAEYAERT

Facing an unprecedented budget crisis, Michigan leaders must make tough choices. Different options to solve the budget crisis exist, including spending cuts, tax increases, consolidation of services and "nonprofitization."

Yes, you heard it right — nonprofitization, not privatization. This means increasing the use of licensed, nonprofit providers for foster care, adoption and juvenile justice programs.

Sen. Bill Hardiman (R-Kentwood) sponsored Senate Bill 232, which increases the existing use of community-based service providers for foster care, juvenile justice and adoption programs. SB 232 allows the Department of Human Services to focus more on oversight, accountability, federal relationships and using licensed, nationally accredited nonprofit providers (the department is not accredited) for more direct service.

SB 232 will not only save Michigan an estimated \$30 million, but will also improve the system to meet the needs of Michigan's most vulnerable population.

Although this seems like a drastic idea, it's only a small change in current practice. This model is already used in most parts of our state and should be welcomed by all of those in favor of providing our kids the best services we can.

Kent County has already witnessed outstanding results. The community purchases 100 percent of its foster care and adoption services from nationally accredited nonprofit providers, resulting in higher quality care for the county's children and saving substantial amounts of taxpayer dollars.

Nationally, more than 75 percent of states use nonprofit providers to deliver direct child welfare services — and the number is rising.

Under SB 232, the Department of Human Services would retain some direct foster care services but focus on oversight, using licensing and contract monitoring to assure quality. This allows Michigan to respond quickly to the reforms that are necessary to improve our current system. Also, there's no reason to worry about a net job loss because employee numbers are determined by licensing regulations, not by the state.

The nonprofitization system has built-in quality control mechanisms to make sure nonprofit providers are doing their best. The organizations are accountable to their communities through their boards of directors and they have the financial backing of the community through donor support — making them more transparent than state-run programs.

Nonprofitization is not a quick fix for Michigan's lagging economy, but a long-term solution to a persistent

problem. Our kids deserve better care than what they've been receiving and allowing nonprofit partners to focus on their unique roles and mandating higher standards for providers will make our system better.

It's no secret Michigan must find a way to better serve our children in foster care, adoption and juvenile justice programs. Our leaders are also obligated to solve the budget crisis. It isn't often there is a chance to improve the quality of care and save taxpayer dollars simultaneously.

SB 232 offers a common sense solution that will better serve our children and enhance the quality of care offered to Michigan's most vulnerable population — all while freeing \$30 million to help deal with Michigan's immense budget difficulties. We must act now.

About the author

Robin Case Naeyaert is mayor pro tem of Mason and a volunteer board member of Child & Family Services-Capital Area.

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LANSING



MARIANNE UDOW
DIRECTOR

News Release

Contact: Colleen Steinman or Maureen Sorbet (517) 373-7394

Welfare reform program will put people back to work and help mid-Michigan families achieve self-sufficiency

May 16, 2007

LANSING – Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS) Director Marianne Udow and Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth Director Keith W. Cooley today showcased the expanded Jobs, Education and Training (JET) welfare reform program that will help mid-Michigan families secure long-term employment and become self-sufficient.

Beginning in September 2004, a broad-based welfare reform work group developed a new approach to creating permanent work force status for DHS clients. JET grew out of this work group and pilot programs in Kent, Oakland, Sanilac and Wayne counties were included in the fiscal year 2006 DHS budget. A net savings of \$16 million is forecast for fiscal year 2007. The program will cost approximately \$40 million to implement, but is expected to result in \$56 million in grant savings.

Preliminary results in the four pilot locations showed that caseloads held steady or slightly declined. In areas that did not offer JET, there was a 5 percent increase. In 2006, JET sites experienced a 3 percent increase in FIP caseload compared to an 11 percent increase in the remainder of the state.

JET expanded to serve 19 counties into 2007 and will help Michigan meet new federal work participation requirements. The mid-Michigan counties using this approach include Barry, Clinton, Eaton, Gratiot and Ingham. The program is a cooperative venture between the departments of Human Services and Labor and Economic Growth, Michigan Works! Agencies and Michigan Rehabilitation Services.

"JET fundamentally changes the way we move families off welfare and toward self-sufficiency," Udow said. "The program supports them in developing job skills and moving permanently to self-sufficiency."

JET is a win-win-win for Michigan. For welfare recipients, it's an opportunity to qualify for - and keep - good paying jobs. For Michigan's businesses, JET is supporting the workforce and skill needs they have today and for the future. For the state, it means more Michigan residents gaining their independence in good jobs and leaving the welfare roles and contributing to the tax base again.

"The JET initiative is just one example of Governor Jennifer Granholm's efforts to promote economic development and increase jobs to transform Michigan's economy," Cooley said. "Her economic plan has been set in motion and it's beginning to work to attract new businesses and diversify our economy. The governor is continually improving our business climate to make our state more attractive to businesses so they'll locate and expand and create jobs here."

The JET program:

- Uses a thorough up-front assessment and Family Self-Sufficiency Plan to tailor supports and services to the individual circumstances of recipient and family.

-MORE-

- Expands educational and training opportunities so clients gain the skills they need to get a good paying job in high-demand fields.
- Focuses career and technical training opportunities on jobs the Michigan economy has available (e.g., health care, construction).
- Provides supportive services when clients face serious barriers to work, with the goal of reducing and removing those barriers so clients can participate in work or work preparation.
- Provides advocacy and support for those who are making application for Supplemental Security Income.
- Extends post-employment support from 90 days to 180 days to help clients retain jobs and prepare a plan for advancement.

“The welfare reform plan will meet federal work participation requirements within the federal time frame, protect the safety net and help people become permanently attached to the labor force so they can move their families out of poverty,” Udow said. “Self-sufficiency is better for families, and what is better for families is better for children.”

For more information about JET go to www.michigan.gov/jet

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